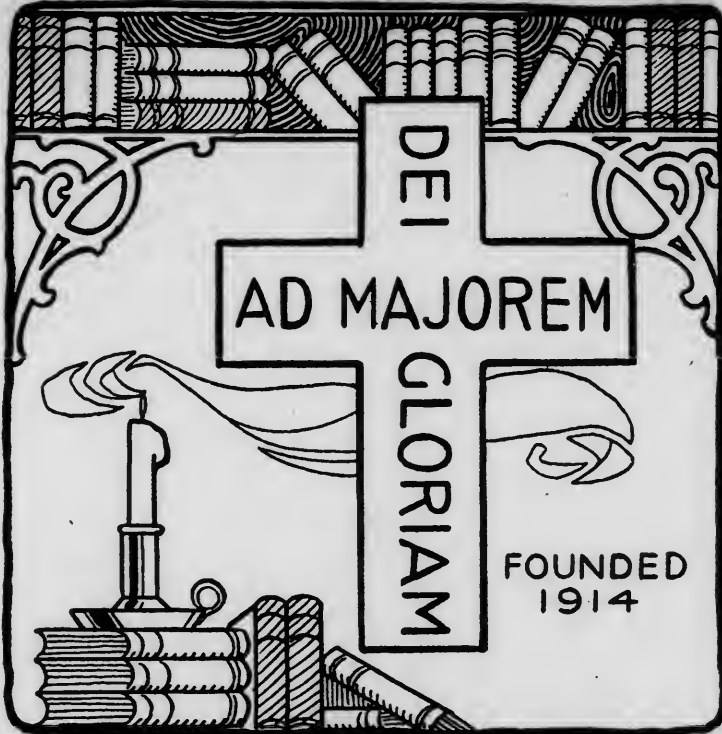


HISTORY OF
WESLEYAN-METHODISM
IN SOME OF THE
SOUTHERN COUNTIES OF ENGLAND

W.W. POCOCK

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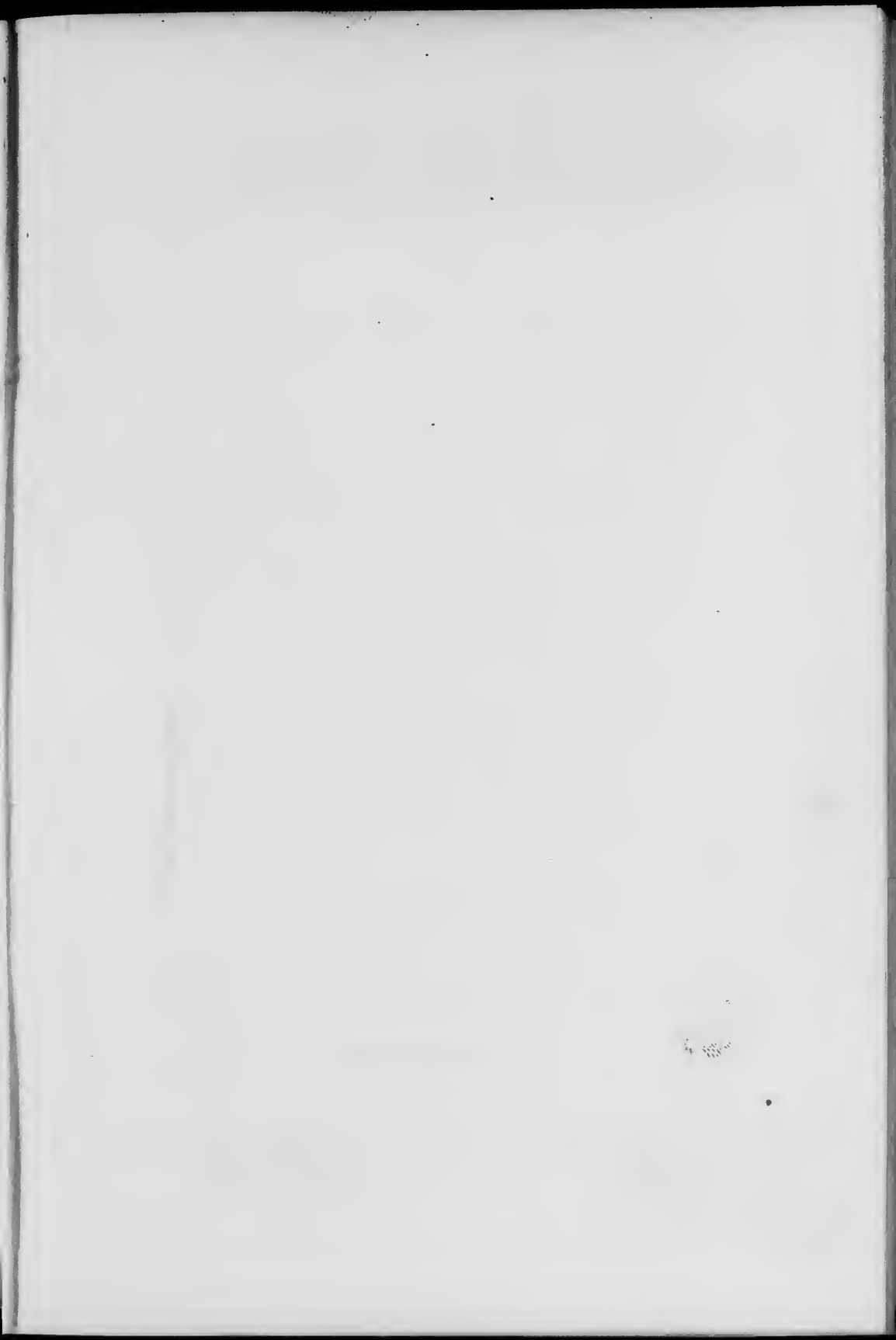
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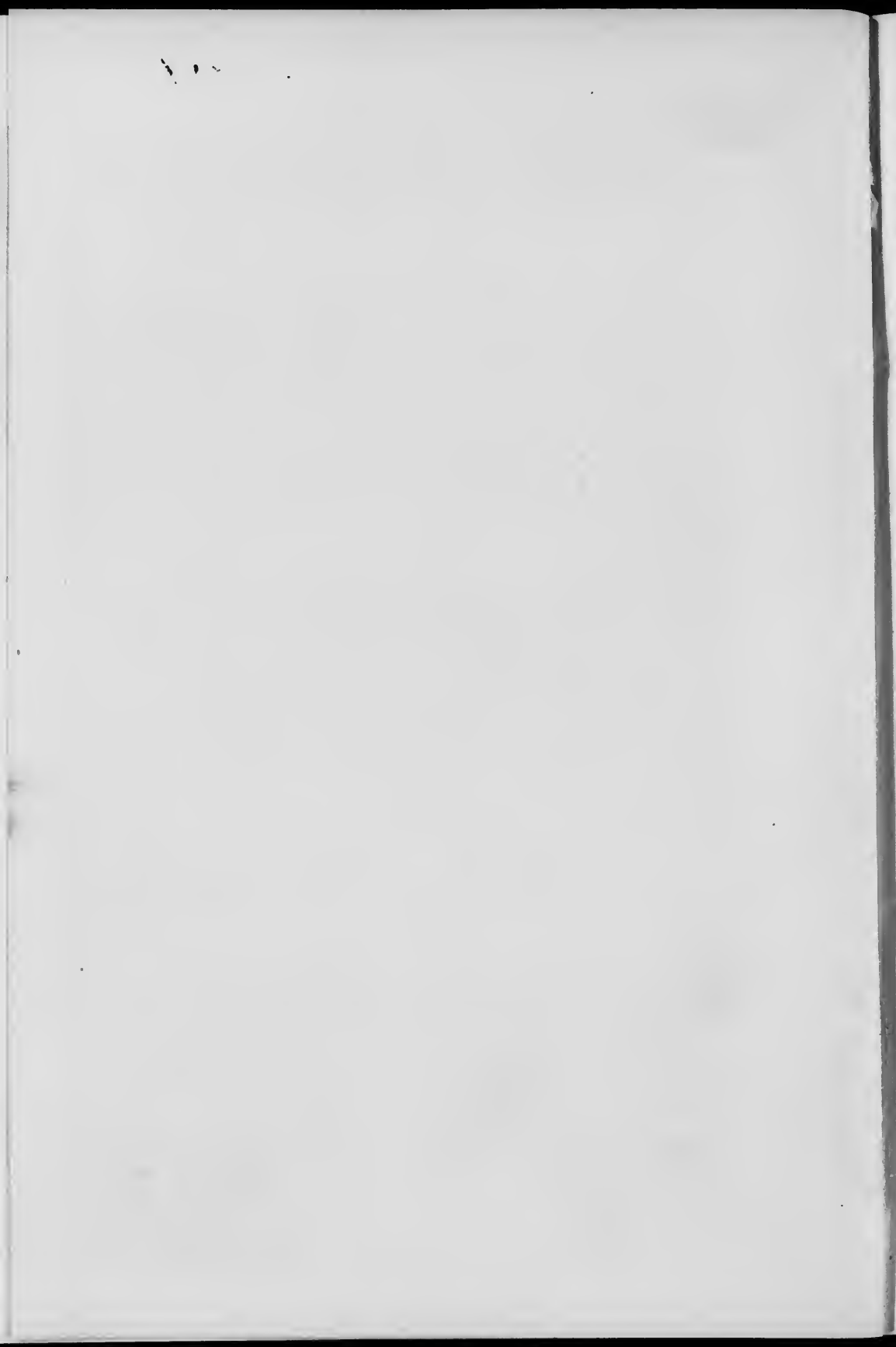
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A SKETCH
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SOUTHERN COUNTIES OF ENGLAND.

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By W. W. POCOCK.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY REV. J. H. RIGG, D.D.

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE had occasion to write, elsewhere, that there were not a few wide districts of England, into which Wesley and his itinerants scarcely attempted to make an entrance, or, if they made the attempt, they gained no hold and speedily desisted. Wesley devoted his labour chiefly to districts where the population was numerous ; where there was free opportunity for the people to follow his ministry, if they were so disposed ; and where he would have the power, night after night, and visit after visit, at not too long intervals, to follow up his work with blow after blow, and stroke upon stroke. He left unvisited most of the purely agricultural regions of England ; the sparse peasant population, bound to their field-work, the torpid tenant farmers, the coarse squires, made up a state of society which offered the heaviest impediments and the fewest opportunities for his work. The miner, the foundryman, the handicraftsman, the 'statesman' freeholder, and the staunch yeoman ; these, and such as these, with the skilled artisan and day-labourer of the towns, formed the

material on which Wesley loved best to bestow his labour. The inhabitants of Epworth and the neighbourhood formed no exception to this rule, for they not only grew hemp and flax, but manufactured them into sacking and bagging. They were a very independent class of people. In short, Wesley well understood the conditions which were all but prohibitory of speedy success, so far as the labours of himself and his itinerant preachers were concerned, and knew better than to spend his strength and time anywhere under such conditions, while he found all his resources too little for the work which lay before him in accessible and inviting fields.

But the districts in which Wesley laboured but little in his lifetime are the very regions where Methodism is now called to labour much, and where it is evident that the 'set time is come' for successful effort. Especially is this the case in that district of country of which Mr. Pocock writes in the interesting pages to which these remarks are introductory. The country lying between London and the south coast—and which may be generally defined as bounded by the South Eastern Railway system on the east, and by the South Western Line to Salisbury and Poole on the west—has been one of the darkest regions of England in a spiritual sense. The almost entire absence of Methodism over the greatest part of it has been one cause of its darkness—a powerful negative cause—for where Methodism has no hold, the contrasted evils of superstitious Anglicanism and of

fatalistic and antinomian Dissent too commonly divide the ground between them ; being, indeed, not seldom found intermixed and stubbornly rooted among the same population. But, besides this negative cause of spiritual darkness and deadness, three active causes of demoralisation have prevailed throughout the entire region. These are : smuggling, spreading inward from the coast, and systematically organized by special tracks and channels which found their great terminus in London ; highwaymanship, for which the great heaths of the district—Bagshot Heath preeminent among the rest—afforded special convenience ; and poaching. Add to these evils the prevalence of pauperism, and the social conditions of the district of which I am speaking will be understood. This is the district of which the central portion came to be called, some years ago, the “ Methodist Wilderness.”

Methodism in London, from various causes, was until quite recently comparatively very weak. One of the causes of this weakness was, of course, the very condition of things in the southern counties of which I have been speaking. The country people of these counties naturally gravitated to London, and formed a large proportion of the metropolitan population. They formed an element ignorant of Methodism, and not only ignorant but antipathetic. On the other hand, the weakness of metropolitan Methodism prevented it from undertaking systematic mission work in these counties.

Of late years, however, these conditions have been materially changed. The railways have brought to London many Methodists from the strongholds of Methodism in the northern and western counties of England. The Metropolitan Chapel Fund has been the means of erecting scores of new chapels in London. Metropolitan Methodism is now becoming powerful, and its liberality is still greater, relatively, than its resources. Besides which, the railway systems which now give access to the region in question—the South Eastern and the South Western systems; and, intermediately, the Brighton and South Coastlines—have taken not a few Methodists into the country towns and villages in which previously the name of Methodism was scarcely known, and hence there are gatherings almost everywhere of at least a few who acknowledge in Methodism the Church of their parentage and training.

The consequence has been the creation, as is shown in the following pages, of a system of Methodist Home Mission Circuits, which now fairly—although somewhat loosely—covers all the ground included within the counties immediately south of London and the middle Thames. For ten years past the London Second District Committee, within whose territory most of these Mission Circuits have been created, has annually appointed a District Home Mission Sub-Committee, which has made this ground and these Circuits its special charge. The liberality of the District for Home Missionary purposes has been greatly stimulated. Be-

sides the Home Mission Circuits which have been and are largely—although in a diminishing proportion, as local resources are developed—sustained by Home Missionary grants, the generous special contributions of the metropolitan and suburban Circuits within the District, and of a number of earnest Christian gentlemen, have enabled the District Committee to secure the services of a general District Missionary Minister, aided by a Lay Agent, for general visitation and for the holding of special missionary services throughout the Mission Circuits. Twice a year, also, the District Home Missionary Sub-Committee has now, for about ten years past, met all the ministers engaged in this special work, usually in some suitable and central station within the area of the Home Missionary region. The effect of these meetings in cheering, instructing, and quickening the workers in the Mission Circuits, and in exciting and sustaining the interest and zeal of the leading gentlemen in the district, who have given themselves to the promotion of this great work, has been simply incalculable.

Among the gentlemen of the Second London District—which District includes west, west central, and south-west London, and the country region already generally defined—who have devoted themselves specially to the promotion of the country Mission work, are two brothers, themselves connected by parentage and property with the southern "Methodist Wilderness," without whose unostentatious, but unfailing and most generous sup-

port, and the benefit of whose experience and counsels, the work, so far as man can see, could never have succeeded as it has done.

For, as the following pages show, the success gained has been great. The cost, indeed, has been great—cost in money, in labour, in hope deferred. But the final result has been most encouraging. The most genuine Home Mission work done for many generations by English Methodism has been done here, on the hardest soil, among a population full of anti-Methodist prejudice. But, after once the soil has been broken up and the seed well sown, pure, humble Methodism, seeking only to create Christian societies of the ancient Methodist form and spirit, has—in the hands of earnest Methodist preachers, of primitive spirit, and competently furnished with preaching ability, and the tact that comes of single-minded, self-forgetting earnestness—won greater victories than almost anywhere else in modern times, where the work was truly and wholly mission work.

A SKETCH
OF THE
HISTORY OF WESLEYAN-METHODISM
IN SOME OF THE
SOUTHERN COUNTIES OF ENGLAND.

THE history of Wesleyan-Methodism, as a whole, is fairly known and understood, but there is still much interest connected with tracing out how it gradually found an entrance into the various localities of our country and won 'its widening way,' into our villages and hamlets. This interest is still heightened in respect to those portions of our land which for a long time, like Gideon's fleece, were left perfectly dry whilst the dew lay all around. Such was the case in the greater part of Hants, all the western parts of Surrey and Sussex, and considerable portions of Wilts and Berkshire. It is little more than a generation since any real effort was first made to introduce Wesleyan ordinances to more than the fringe of the region here indicated; nay, it is hardly twenty years since a well-sustained attempt was made to take possession of the central parts of what was not inappropriately termed a 'Methodist Wilderness.' We will not wait to enquire the reasons of this delay, but will content ourselves with remarking that it has not arisen

from the fact that the population is more sparse than in other agricultural counties. In Bedfordshire in 1851 there were 270 persons to the square mile, in Cornwall 259, in Leicestershire 287, in Lincolnshire 146; yet in all these, by no means excepting the last, Wesleyan-Methodism is strong. But it is weak in Hants, where at the same time there were 240 persons to the square mile, and in Sussex, where there were 230. It does not appear, therefore, that the thinness of the population need discourage exertion. Nor does want of success stand in our way. The accession of members, judged of upon any fair principle of comparison, has of late years been much larger in proportion in the new stations, than in the other parts of the District in which they are situated.

Though Mr. Wesley's first journey from London, after his return from America, was in the direction of the region we are now considering, he was never led to bestow very much time or labour upon it. Mr. Hall, a clergyman who had married Wesley's sister Martha, resided at Salisbury, and thither, in February, 1738, four weeks after his landing, Wesley bent his steps to visit his mother, who was staying with them. He again visited her there prior to his leaving for Germany. This was on June 8th in the same year, just a fortnight after the memorable May 24th, when he tells us, 'I felt my heart strangely warmed' at the meeting in Aldersgate-street; 'I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He

had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*.' It is well known that for the first two or three years of his really evangelistic labours his time was mostly spent in London, Oxford, or Bristol, and the parts intermediate or adjacent. In these journeys, usually effected on horseback, he not unfrequently preached at Reading and at Windsor, and on one occasion he was induced to turn aside and visit Dummer, near Basingstoke, at the request of Mr. Kinchin, one of a knot of clergymen who, with Wesley, being 'of one heart as well as one judgment, resolved to be Bible-Christians at all events.' Here, in the morning he had 'a large and attentive congregation ;' and in the evening he was requested to expound at the neighbouring town of Basingstoke ; which he did again three weeks later. Mr. Kinchin, however, died January, 1742, so Mr. Wesley's visits were not repeated.

On a similar journey in 1743 he 'walked over' from Windsor to Egham, in Surrey, 'where,' he tells us, 'Mr. ——— preached one of the most miserable sermons I ever heard : stuffed full of dull, senseless, improbable lies, of those he complimented with the title of "False prophets." ' Newbury and Hungerford, in Berks, were also occasionally the scenes of his labours. He visited Chertsey, in Surrey, in 1750, and preached from the gallery in front of Mrs. C——'s summer-house at St. Ann's. The floor of the house itself had given way under the weight of the people ; but no one being hurt they adjourned to the outside. His visit here was repeated the two following weeks.

He was again at Salisbury in August, 1746, and was surprised at his unhappy brother-in-law Hall desiring him to preach ; but on his next visit eighteen months later he was forbidden the house. Mr. Hall had now entirely abandoned all good things ; though only a few years before he had sedulously gathered together a Society, the wreck of which Mr. Wesley now met and encouraged. In September, 1750, he occupied the chapel formerly Mr. Hall's, as he did again two years later, by which time, one would suppose, the Society must have grown in numbers considerably, as he spent two days in severally examining the members. At the same visit he also 'endeavoured to re-unite the little scattered flock at Winterburn,' where a Wesleyan Society and Chapel exist to this day. Indeed, the Salisbury Circuit is one of the strongest in the southern counties, and is mentioned here as the verge from which Mr. Wesley usually approached this district, and as an example of the results of his careful attentions, for he repeatedly visited it in after years.

We do not find that he visited Portsmouth, by far the largest and most important town in Hants, till July 8th, 1753, though he had then been some fifteen years engaged in his 'irregular' work. Before this, he had already paid Newcastle, at the extreme north, fourteen or fifteen visits, taking intermediate towns in his way ; had been nearly all over Ireland several times ; he and his brother had been mobbed at Wednesbury, Plymouth-Dock, Shepton, and in Cornwall, besides less

serious assaults in many other places ; he was now in his fifty-first year, and was already a veteran in the work. It was only a few weeks later that he was seized with severe illness, a 'galloping consumption,' as his brother described it, who hastened up from Bristol to see the last of him ; and all hopes of recovery being abandoned, he wrote his own Epitaph ; nor was he restored to his usual health for several months. That his energy, however, was as yet by no means abated, was witnessed by the spirit with which he undertook the journey. After preaching morning and afternoon 'at the Chapel' in London, he took horse and rode well-nigh forty miles to Godalming, with only half-an-hour's rest at Cobham ; and at half-past four the next morning he again started on another forty miles' ride to Portsmouth, which he reached at one o'clock. He was not too tired to take a walk round the town, which he supposes to be the only regular fortification in England or Ireland ; estimates the population, including that of Gosport, at half that of Bristol ; and describes its inhabitants as the most civil people he had ever seen in any sea-port in England.

We must conclude that his preachers, or probably Mr. Whitefield's, had been here with some frequency, as he remarks : 'I was surprised to find so little fruit here, after so much preaching. That accursed itch of disputing had well-nigh destroyed all the seed which had been sown. And this "vain jangling" they called "contending for the faith." I doubt the whole faith of

these poor wretches is but an opinion...I preached at half-an-hour after six, in an open part of the common adjoining to the new church. The congregation was large and well-behaved: not one scoffer did I see, nor one trifler.' In October, the same year, he was again at Portsmouth, where he 'admired not so much the immense number of people, as the uncommon decency of behaviour which ran through the whole congregation. After sermon,' he adds, 'I explained to them, at large, the nature and design of our Societies; and desired that if any of them were willing to join therein, they would call on me, either that evening or in the morning. I made no account of that shadow of a Society which was before, without Classes, without order, or rules: having never seen, read or heard the printed Rules; which ought to have been given them at their first meeting.' Here is plainly indicated the truth that has been illustrated in a thousand instances since, that however well-inclined the people may be, Methodist life and vigour cannot be maintained without due attention to strictly Methodist rules and usages. So far as we can judge, from this time forward Portsmouth Methodism has steadily grown, till now it is one of the very few bright spots in Hants.

He did not visit Portsmouth again till October, 1758, when he preached to 'a small, serious congregation' in Whitefield's Tabernacle. On this occasion, as on the last, he proceeded to the Isle of Wight, and also preached in the street at Fareham; 'a wild multitude

was present.' Another five years passed, apparently, before he again found his way into these parts, and even then he did not reach Portsmouth; nor till 1767, when the use of the Tabernacle was refused him. From this time forward he generally paid Portsmouth a visit in the autumn. Indeed, this seems to have been the only place in this region in which he felt much interest, or met with much success. On one occasion he says that though very tired, 'the congregation soon made me forget my weariness. Indeed, the people in general here are more noble than most in the South of England. They receive the word of God "with all readiness of mind," and show civility, at least, to all that preach it.'

It is manifest that by the date of John Wesley's first Conference—June, 1744—London, Bristol, St. Ives and Newcastle were regarded by him as centres; and that he had hopes of gradually diffusing the Gospel over the whole land by going 'a little and little farther from' these which he names, 'or any other Societies. So a little leaven would spread with more effect and less noise; and help would always be at hand.' We have no record of his 'assistants' till the next year, when they numbered fourteen, exclusive of clergymen. We will, therefore, see how Circuits and preachers were multiplied; for this was always done as the result of the spread of the work, and with a view to a yet wider extension, of which it is consequently the best illustration. Two years later (1746) it was stated that there were seven Circuits, of which London included Surrey,

Kent, Essex, Brentford, Egham, Windsor and Wycombe; and Bristol included Somersetshire, Portland, Wilts, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. And a year later the names of twenty assistants, and 'perhaps' two others, are given; while thirty-eight are enumerated who 'assist us chiefly in one place'—Local-preachers we should now call them. By 1749 the places in the Bristol Circuit had grown to sixteen, of which Devizes and Salisbury were two; but by 1758 Wiltshire is named as a distinct Circuit.

So did the work expand, till, in 1765, we begin to have a continuous list of Circuits and their preachers, to which two years later the number of members of the Society in each is added, giving us a very much clearer view of the success that crowned their labours. At that date the Circuits in England had grown to twenty-six, served by seventy-four preachers; to-day swollen to 1,636 in Great Britain, dispersed over 733 Circuits, and having in their charge 407,085 members! Though the numbers of the members could not at first be ascertained, yet they amounted to 25,211 in 1767. Wilts now stood as No. 8 in the list of Circuits, with Alexander Mather and a young man. Then follow the names of two men without any Circuit being assigned them. In 1768 two divisions are designated: 'Wilts South' and 'Wilts North,' with an aggregate of 956 members of the Society, and four preachers. Their Circuits embrace what now constitute the Bath and Portsmouth Districts, with any parts of Surrey or

Sussex that they could reach ; at all events, none others were designated for any of those parts, except so much of Surrey as was contiguous to London ; such as Dorking and Wandsworth, and the parts of Sussex about Rye and Winchelsea. Twelve years later 'South Wilts' gives place to 'Salisbury' as the name of the Circuit, which then pretty nearly coincided with the Portsmouth District of to-day ; but included the whole of Hants and any Methodism or openings there might be in the adjacent parts of Surrey and Sussex. The number of members was 331, with four preachers. These particulars afford us a starting-point from which to trace the expansion of Methodism in the region more directly under our present notice.

From Portsmouth, Mr. Wesley, in July, 1753, had crossed over to the Isle of Wight, with the beauty of which he was much impressed. Here he 'found a little Society in tolerable order. Several of them had found peace with God.' He preached several times at Newport, in the Market-place, to large and serious congregations. In October, the same year, he again visited them. He preached more than once in the Market-place at Newport—'to most of the town, and many who came from the neighbouring villages,' at one of which—Shorhill—he also preached. He remarks : 'Surely, if there were any here to preach the Word of God with power, a multitude would soon be obedient to the faith.' He calls them a 'humane, loving people.' The work in the island, however, does not seem to

have prospered at this time, as in 1775 he writes Mr. Jasper Winscom (who 'travelled' from 1788 to 1792, but is said to have been a Local-preacher at Whitchurch in 1783) to the effect that he will have nothing 'interfere with our making a fair trial of the Isle of Wight.' He approves of the methods proposed, and promises financial assistance. Three years later he reminds the same gentleman that—'Ours are *travelling* Preachers ;' and that he 'can never consent that any of them should remain for a month together in the island,' which was only a *part* of their Circuit. Again, in a note in 1782, he acknowledges that 'the work of God has not prospered in the Salisbury Circuit for several years.' In 1787, however, the Isle of Wight appears as a distinct station, reporting eighty-seven members in 1788 ; and after some variation, it, in 1790, is included in the Portsmouth Circuit, now first constituted with 430 members ; Salisbury, from which it was dissociated, retaining 238 out of 556. He had opened a new chapel at Newport in 1781, when he, 'after preaching, explained the nature of a Methodist Society ; of which few had before the least conception.' He had been there again three years later, when 'all the Ministers and most of the gentry at Newport' attended his preaching. His last visit was in 1790, when, he says, 'both the nights I preached here, the preaching-house would by no means contain the congregation. I was likewise well-pleased with the poor, plain, artless Society. Here at least we have not lost our labour.'

Winchester does not appear to have been visited by Mr. Wesley before 1766, on which occasion he can have preached there but once. Again, in 1768, he was there ; and henceforth he usually took it on his way from Salisbury to Portsmouth ; so we find him there in October, 1769, and ten or twelve subsequent years. In November, 1785, he opened a new chapel there, for the erection of which the previous Conference had given permission. His remark upon this occasion is not complimentary. He had a large audience, but says : ' I have not seen a people less affected : they seemed to be mere stocks and stones. However, I have cast my bread upon the water ; possibly it may be found again after many days.' But at his last visit, in 1790, he remarks : ' The congregation was larger than usual, and, what was stranger still, seemed not a little affected.'

It is not to be wondered at that whilst he was being enthusiastically received, and cheered by manifest tokens of the readiness of the people to receive the Word in other parts of the country, he should run through the three counties of Wilts, Hants and Surrey in three or four days, though he and his brother could repeatedly devote a whole month to Newcastle or Cornwall. It does not appear that Charles Wesley ever preached within the borders of either of these three counties, except at London and Devizes, where he was in danger of his life from the mob : a disturbance he had not anticipated, because John had assured him it was impossible to raise a mob there.

John Wesley 'preached in the new house at Whitchurch' on September 25th, 1759, and again on October 2nd, 1771. On October 5th, 1779, he says: 'Many even of the rich attended, and behaved with much seriousness.' A year later he remarks: 'The preaching-house at Whitchurch, though much enlarged, could not contain the congregation in the evening. Some genteel people were inclined to smile at first; but their mirth was quickly over. The awe of God fell upon the whole congregation, and many "rejoiced unto Him with reverence."'

Mr. Wesley passed through Basingstoke in 1747 and 1751; but it does not appear that he stopped to preach on either of those occasions. But on January 10th, 1759, his audience was such as to put him 'in mind of the wild beasts at Ephesus:' an impression probably repeated in the minds of the Salvation Army in this town not long since. 'Yet they were unusually attentive in the evening, although many of them could not hear.' On the next day he preached 'to a small, serious company,' and 'went on to London.' On September 24th in the same year he again preached there 'to a people slow of heart, and dull of understanding.' He preached there again in November, 1760, and September, 1763, when he remarks: 'Even here there is at length some prospect of doing good. A large number of people attended, to whom God enabled me to speak strong words; and they seemed to sink into the hearts of the hearers.' His only other recorded visit

was in 1766. After this he bent his steps from Salisbury to Winchester, and thence to Portsmouth, whence he rode to London without stopping anywhere, though his road led him through Petersfield, Godalming, Guildford and Kingston.

Considering the importance of Southampton at the present time, we feel surprised at the smallness of the attention it received from Mr. Wesley. His visits to any given locality no doubt depended to a great extent upon the invitations he received from it; and we may conclude they were not very numerous from Hants, Surrey and Sussex. The first time he preached at Southampton was on October 14th, 1767. Having ridden from Romsey, and the weather being bad, he 'sent a line to the Mayor, requesting leave to preach in the Town Hall. In an hour he sent me word, I might; but in an hour more he retracted. Poor Mayor of Southampton! So I preached in a small room, and did not repent my labour.' His next visit was not till October 10th, 1783, when he found 'two or three there also who feared and loved God.' Going on to Winchester, he had a somewhat similar experience as with the Mayor of Southampton. 'A clergyman,' he says, 'having offered me his church, I purposed beginning at five; but the key was not to be found; so I made a virtue of necessity, and preached near the Cross Street; probably to double the congregation which would have been in the church.'

His last visit to Southampton was in 1787, when he

preached thrice whilst waiting for a ship to sail for Guernsey ; and expresses his belief that some of those that listened to him,—‘ will not be forgetful hearers, but will bring forth fruit with patience.’ Dr. Coke was with him ; and, being driven into Yarmouth harbour in the Isle of Wight, the Doctor preached twice and Wesley twice ; but they went to church at eleven on the Sunday. They were driven into Swanage, where Mr. Wesley found we had ‘ still a little Society ;’ and where he preached in the Presbyterian Meeting-house. Writing in 1777 he says : ‘ Some years since, we had a little Society at Southampton ; perhaps you may find some fragments of it remaining.’ These two instances, whilst they betray the feebleness of each Cause, at the same time indicate how the truth, as promulgated by Wesley and his helpers, found lodgment in obscure corners.

Mr. Wesley paid Dorking several visits ; and his remarks on what was apparently his first visit are highly characteristic. Under January 12th, 1764, he states : ‘ In the afternoon rode to Dorking. But the gentleman to whose house I was invited, seemed to have no desire I should preach. So that evening I had nothing to do. Friday, 13th : I went at noon into the street, and in a broad place not far from the market-place proclaimed—“ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” ’ This shows how it was by invitations to some particular house, that his visits were in great part regulated ; that he expected those inviting him to make arrangements for his preaching, and intimates the irk-

someness he felt at 'having nothing to do ;' that is, in being deprived of an opportunity of declaring the truth. Seven years later he again preached at Dorking, and at Ryegate, to a people 'dull indeed as stones.' He generally took Dorking on his way to Canterbury and Dover, or Rye, or on the return journey by Chatham and Sevenoaks. On more than one occasion he mentions the Society with satisfaction, but on nearly his last visit he remarks: 'I scarce find any Society in England like this. Year after year it seems at one stay, neither increasing nor decreasing ; only if one or two die one or two are quickly added to fill up the number.' In substance he repeats the same remark a year later. He had opened a new house here in 1772, which it may be concluded was replaced by one of which the highly-valued John Corderoy, lately deceased, and Thomas Gurney, laid the foundation stone in 1850 ; both contributing largely to the cost of the edifice. This, though not well placed, has quite lately been enlarged to hold three times the original number of persons ; and at Ryegate one is now in progress to seat four hundred or more, ultimately seven hundred, if galleries be added. For these, as well as the one at Red Hill, the neighbourhoods are mainly indebted to Mr. Duncan and his friends.

Wesley visited Andover in 1759, 'determined to try' if he 'could do any good ;' and again the following year, when he preached 'to a few dead stones.' On both occasions he was on his way from Salisbury to Basingstoke and London. He preached at Romsey in 1766-7-

8-9. He describes his audience as 'quiet' and 'unaffected.'

Some little idea of the state of the Societies at this time may be gathered from the following entries. Wesley in 1774 found at Corfe Castle a 'Society, artless, and teachable, and full of good desires. But few of them yet have got any further than to see "men as trees walking."' Two days later he preached at Langton, three or four miles from Corfe Castle: here 'likewise' was a 'little Society;' and in the evening near Swanage. 'Here at length,' he adds, 'I found three or four persons, and all of one family, who seemed really to enjoy the faith of the Gospel. . . . I fear the preachers have been more studious to please than to awaken.'

England and Wales were divided into nineteen districts immediately upon the death of Mr. Wesley; but were not distinguished upon the *Minutes* till 1798, when the Salisbury District is shown to consist of seven Circuits: Salisbury, Portsmouth, Southampton, Newbury, Poole, Bradford, and Shepton-Mallet; containing fifteen preachers (besides two supernumeraries), and 3,150 members of the Society.

Hitherto Portsmouth Circuit had included all Hampshire and adjacent parts of Surrey and Sussex; or, perhaps, speaking more correctly, nothing whatever was done, Methodistically speaking, in these 'adjacent parts,' nor in large sections of Hampshire itself. But in 1798 this Circuit was divided, and Southampton was

made the head of a Circuit, with 180 members and two preachers ; leaving Portsmouth with 510 members and three preachers. A chapel was built at Southampton in this year ; and, it may be concluded, a preacher's house furnished, as, notwithstanding the ' present embarrassed state ' of the Conference Funds, a grant from the Yearly Collection of £23 10s. 4d. was made towards that purpose.

The Isle of Wight continued to be a part of the Portsmouth Circuit up to 1809, when it is put down as a Mission without a number, and the Missionary is directed to interchange labours with the unmarried preachers at Portsmouth. But in the following year, its members numbering 260, the Mission is raised to the dignity of a ' number,' with three preachers allotted to it. In 1811 a private subscription and public collection in the Portsmouth Circuit are authorized by the Conference towards furnishing a house for a preacher's family in the Isle of Wight, and collections in the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Salisbury Circuits on behalf of the chapel at Ryde, and in the Southampton Circuit on behalf of the one at Cowes (for the erection of which permission was given in 1805) ; showing that chapels then existed at those two places. In 1826 there were eleven chapels, three travelling and twenty-three Local-preachers, with 430 members ; in 1883, three Circuits, seven Preachers, and 1,180 members.

In 1814 ' the single preacher ' in the Portsmouth Circuit (there being four in all) is directed ' to reside at

Fareham,' indicating the growing importance of that portion of the Circuit ; but it was not till 1867 that it was erected into a Circuit, with 129 members and one preacher (Portsmouth Methodism has for some reason or other not been very diffusive) ; Gosport retaining 202, and one minister. Gosport had been divided from Portsmouth in 1831, with 205 members ; Portsmouth retaining 800 and three preachers, one of whom was to give half his labours to Gosport. Portsmouth was divided into two Circuits in 1874, beside the garrison work, and now numbers 1,091 members.

Winchester, since Mr. Wesley's death, has gone through several changes. Up to 1816 it was united with Southampton, but in that year it was made the head of a Circuit, with two preachers : the second being directed, in 1817, to reside at Andover ; the members being 300. In 1818 Winchester again joins Southampton, and Andover is made the head of a Circuit, with one minister and 190 members ; and in after years he is directed to change with the preachers at Southampton. In 1838, the members in the Society having risen to 500, Winchester is added to the title of the Circuit with Southampton, taking three preachers. In 1862 it was made the head of a Circuit, with two preachers, the second residing at Romsey ; and in 1873, with 241 members, these places were divided, each taking one minister, with 138 and 95 members respectively.

The chapel at Winchester in which the Methodists

worshipped up to 1864 was indeed of the old type. It was, in fact, a loft over stables or similar buildings. But in that year, after much difficulty, a site was obtained in a central position, and a modern chapel erected, with provision for a day-school, which is still maintained, though not without a struggle. At Romsey there was a sufficient chapel; but in so objectionable a situation that in 1882, by the assistance of the Fund for the Extension of Methodism, a new chapel, with improved accommodation for Sunday-school and Classes, was erected in a better position.

The Brentford Circuit, instituted in 1811, but afterwards styled the Hammersmith or Hammersmith and Windsor, embraced the whole of the eastern part of Surrey outside of London, and extended to the confines of the Sevenoaks Circuit. But in 1832 'Croydon' is imported into the title, and the second preacher is directed to reside there. Now also Horsham first appears on the *Minutes*, a chapel having been built there, greatly aided by the friends at Brighton. Its members in 1833 numbered 54. In 1836 Croydon was dissociated from Hammersmith, taking all south of the Thames except Wandsworth and Richmond; but having Horsham annexed, and therefore including Dorking and Reigate. The members were 220, which had only grown to 255 in 1840, when a rearrangement of Circuits in this vicinity was determined upon.

In 1796, William Church, grandfather of the Rev. H. L. Church, to whom I am indebted for the following

particulars, undertook a Mission in Hants, under the direction of the Rev. Mr. Eyre, a minister of some note in London, possibly the Rev. J. Eyre, one of Lady Huntingdon's ministers. Mr. Church had been 'received on trial' in 1777, but 'desisted from travelling' in 1790; his labours having been principally spent on Wales and the South-Western Counties. He records: 'On Saturday, August 13th, 1796, I left London, in company with the Rev. Mr. Eyre; arrived in Petersfield in the evening, where we were kindly received by the friends. Sunday, 14th, I heard Mr. Eyre twice, and preached once. It was a blessed day to me. Wednesday, 17th, I preached at Petersfield in the evening, to an attentive, decent congregation.' It is not known how long this Mission was continued, but the latest notice we have is to the effect that on October 13th in the same year he 'preached at Harting for the first time. It was a very comfortable opportunity.' Steep, Redford, Shottersmill and Midhurst were scenes of his ministry; and he also visited Liphook, where he hoped to secure a place for preaching. At the last-named place the Bible-Christians have a well-sustained cause, and they till lately had one at Midhurst. These probably would gather up any results of Mr. Church's labours remaining after the termination of his Mission. Mr. Church was fully employed, and apparently as fully enjoyed his work; and no doubt that, as his grandson remarks, 'from his lips the people would have good Methodist doctrine.'

The Rev. J. Mason, who became a Supernumerary in 1797, settled at West-Meon, near Petersfield. Though sixty-five years of age, he made himself extremely useful by visiting the Societies and supplying lack of service. Between West-Meon and Portsmouth there are several Societies and congregations going by the name of Methodists; and, though quite independent, looking towards Portsmouth Methodism as in some way their mother Church, and more or less supplied by preachers from the local staff, amongst whom, if I remember rightly, the late Mr. Bustard was at one time prominent. It would be interesting to enquire how far these Societies owe their origin or their survival to Mr. Mason's labours and influence. He was a highly-cultivated man, of extensive reading and acquaintance with physical science; 'and his piety towards God, and his benevolence towards man,' are, by one who knew him well, said to have been 'as deep as they were sincere.' 'I shall not look upon his like again.' He died in 1810.

We find Sussex one of the earliest Circuits enumerated in 1765. But this did not include any portion of West Sussex, which, probably on account of the successes achieved by Whitefield's and Lady Huntingdon's Preachers, who had made Brighton and Oathall a sort of centre by 1760 or soon after, did not receive much attention from the Wesleys and the Conference. The Members of the Society in this Circuit amounted only to 197 in 1766. The name of it was in 1795 changed to 'Rye,' a place in which Mr. Wesley took a lively

interest to the very last, and one to which the administration of the Lord's Supper had been conceded before 1794, as well as to Maidstone, in the same Circuit. He preached here but a few months before his death (October 5th, 1790), and says: 'Though the warning was short, the congregation was exceeding large, and behaved with remarkable seriousness.' He calls them a 'loving, well-united people.' On the following Thursday he preached his last *open-air* sermon in Winchelsea, under a tree long known and preserved as 'Wesley's tree,' to most of the inhabitants of the town. He had not long before opened a new chapel at this place. His first visit to Rye seems to have been in October, 1758, when he rode from Portsmouth, making no halt except at Rottingdean. Rapid as were his progresses through Wilts and Hants, occupying only three or four days, here he stayed nearly a week, preaching several times at Rye 'to a crowded audience, with great enlargement of spirit;' twice at Northiam, 'to far the largest congregation' he 'had seen in Sussex;' and once at Rolvenden.

The number of the members of the Society having by 1802 risen to 680, with five Preachers, the Sevenoaks Circuit was carved out of Rye Circuit; and in 1822 Hastings was separated from it, John Geden being the Preacher appointed. In 1847 Tunbridge-Wells was taken from Sevenoaks.

In 1807 the Lewes and Brighton Circuit was instituted, with two men, one of whom is designated

'Missionary;' and as 120 members are reported in 1808, it would appear that there were already several preaching-places to take to; and as three Preachers are now appointed, and permission given to build a chapel at Brighton, and the scale of contribution towards the Preachers' Merciful Fund and others appears liberal, it may perhaps be concluded that there were some well-to-do and liberal people in this Circuit. In 1811 Lewes was dropped from the title of the Circuit, which evidently included Eastbourne. In 1824 Worthing was made the head of a Circuit; but the experiment did not then give satisfaction, so it was abandoned, and Lewes separated from Brighton in 1825.

Godalming, in Surrey, now forming part of the Guildford Circuit, is centrally-situated with respect to the so-called 'Methodist Wilderness' of Hants, Surrey, and Sussex, and on the old coaching-road from London to Portsmouth. A chapel erected here in 1790 was in the use of the followers of John Wesley in the year 1802. Probably it was the possession of this that induced the Conference of 1793 to place there a young man as a Missionary. Though no intermediate record appears, this Mission again crops up in 1796, when £86 5s. 11d. is said to have been spent on the Missions at Colchester, Godalming, and Doncaster; and again in 1797, when, under the heading of Portsmouth, it is directed in the Minutes of Conference that 'The Godalming and Crowdhill Missions must be supplied by the single men under the direction

of the Superintendent.' Crowdhill is in the Winchester Circuit. The cost of the Godalming Mission for this year is set down at £19 18s. 11d. ; for the following year at £11. Though this chapel had disappeared from our records and plans before 1826, it was probably still in our occupation in 1809, when a fresh Mission was undertaken, or the old one revived. Mr. Austen, a well-established tradesman, was the principal means of reintroducing Methodism into Godalming in 1826 or 7, as we shall presently see.

In 1809 four Missions were started in the London District. One of these was called the 'Surrey' Mission. The title is changed to 'Bletchingly and Farnham Mission' in the following year, probably to indicate its range : Godalming being nearly equidistant from both those towns, which are thirty miles apart as the crow flies, a stretch of country affording some of the finest hill-scenery in Her Majesty's kingdom, to the great surprise of Her Majesty herself, when from Aldershot she reached the top of 'The Hog's Back' ridge. It now had the dignity of a number and an additional labourer.

Moses Dunn, the first Preacher appointed to the Surrey Mission, twenty years later took the trouble to go from London to Guildford to congratulate the Rev. William Wilson upon having succeeded in introducing Methodism into Guildford, an effort in which he said he had himself failed. But the failure was not so complete as might appear to him. The interview took place

at the house of Mrs. Attfield, herself a witness that some precious seed remained.

This Mission was in 1811 divided into two, of which 'The Bletchingly' was one, with a man of one year's standing as the Missionary. The other was called the Farnham Mission.

The District originally named after Salisbury, is in this year designated the Portsmouth District. It included the Mission of Farnham. Bletchingly now reported thirty-three members, reduced to twenty-five in 1812, when Farnham reported forty-two. The Surrey Mission is said to have been abandoned in 1812, but this was probably only the Bletchingly division, which included Guildford; as in 1815 expenses amounting to £15 3s. are said to have been incurred at Farnham, just covered, two years later, by £15 12s., 'surplus received from the sale of Farnham Chapel.' In 1814 'Reading and Farnham' report 185 members, reduced to 'Reading 94,' in the year following. This reduction of numbers is probably due to the sale of the Farnham Chapel, and the consequent abandonment of that part of the Mission-field.

Reading was visited by Mr. Wesley on several occasions. In 1747 he informs us that Mr. Richards constrained him to preach in a room 'he had built for that purpose,' and relates the following particulars: 'Mr. J. R. had just sent his brother word that he had hired a mob to pull down his preaching-house that night. In the evening Mr. S. Richards overtook a large company

of bargemen walking towards it, whom he immediately accosted, and asked if they would go with him and hear a good sermon ; telling them : " I will make room for you, if you were as many more." They said they would go with all their hearts. " But, neighbours," said he, " would it not be as well to leave those clubs behind you ? Perhaps some of the women may be frightened at them." They threw them all away, and walked quietly with him to the house, where he set them in a pew. In the conclusion of my sermon, one of them who used to be their captain, being the head taller than his fellows, rose up, and looking round the congregation, said : " The gentleman says nothing but what is good : I say so ; and there is not a man here that shall dare to say otherwise." '

Mr. Wesley visited them again the following years. On his visit in 1775 he says : ' A large room was presently filled, and all the spaces adjoining. And I have hardly ever seen a people who seemed more eager to hear.' And two years later he exclaims : ' How many years were we beating the air at this town ! But it is not so at present. That generation is passed away, and their children are of a more excellent spirit ; ' a remark the result of extensive and long experience that may well encourage us to try again in any locality in which, in former years, our efforts may have been fruitless. And yet, with all this promise, the work had to be begun again some thirty years later. How was this ? Possibly from the fact that good Mr. Richards, after

all his zeal and expenditure in building a preaching-house, failed to secure it for Methodistic uses. In how many places has Methodism died out from similar causes ! Sometimes, as at Petersfield in 1838, Antinomianism or other false doctrine has crept into the heart of the owner of the premises, or his love has grown cold. In others, death has intervened ; and though too late an effort may have been made to remedy the default by a testamentary disposition, ignorance of the operation of the laws of mortmain has rendered the intention fruitless. A chapel, ever so humble, settled on true Methodist lines, is the only probable security for the permanence of Methodist services, but it should also be free from encumbrance, or the security may speedily become unreal.

Of these Missions, Dr. Coke, in the Missionary Report for 1811, has these remarks :

‘ At Bletchingly, in Surrey, we have also made a beginning, and have before us a prospect of good. In this and other neighbouring towns, which are many, and contain numerous inhabitants, there is a spirit of hearing, and in the former we have about thirty who have joined our Society. In some of these places, the good Providence of God has raised up many friends to His Gospel In Farnham there is a prospect of much good ; but the want of convenient places to contain and accommodate the people who assemble, prevents us making a fair trial of those who seem desirous to hear. In short, in this neighbourhood, we have all the assurance which appearances can give us that a prosperous Mission will be established under the grace of God ; and nothing but the want of pecuniary means prevents us from making a vigorous attempt.’

Sussex again appears as a ‘ Mission ’ in 1809, and

Chichester as the location of another. It must be to these that Dr. Coke's report alludes, saying :

'It does not appear that the Mission in the vicinity of Bright-helmstone, in Sussex, is so prosperous as some we have mentioned, though even here our missionaries have not laboured in vain. In this quarter (says a letter dated November 2nd, 1810) several new places present themselves ; and, so far as we can judge, bid fair to encourage Missionary efforts. The Chichester Mission may be justly deemed important, as including all the places already open, and others which appear ready to receive the Gospel, where no efforts have been made by Methodists to carry the Gospel. We hope the time is not far distant when many places on and near the coasts of Hampshire and Sussex, now the seats of ignorance, sin, and misery, will hear the joyful sound of the Gospel, feel its influence in their hearts, and exemplify it in their lives.'

The numbers reported for these two Missions in 1811 are 72 and 55 respectively, so that we hardly see why the good doctor should write so gloomily. However, the Sussex Mission drops out this year, without a trace of provision made for the 72 ; and Chichester drags on till 1824, when its numbers suddenly rise from 120 to 230, with two preachers ; but those of Brighton drop from 540 to 430 ; so that it may be concluded that some changes of boundaries had taken place. A collection for Eastbourne chapel is allowed in 1816, showing there must have been a congregation and Society there.

Dr. Coke was the strenuous advocate of Missions at home as well as abroad. He had for years raised the larger portion of the necessary funds, either from his own purse or by his personal exertions, and still the finances of the Conference were in an embarrassed state. It was

accordingly determined to relinquish Home Missions as separate stations, and to attach them to adjoining Circuits. This was not possible in all cases, and the Bletchingly and Godalming Missions were abandoned; and though Farnham was, for the time, attached to Reading, it also fell to the ground before long. The Report quoted above puts down the expenses of the Bletchingly Mission for two years £118 17s. 2d. and £52 18s. 3d.; Chichester £10 19s. There were about thirty-six others in the kingdom, bringing the total expenditure up to £7,165 3s. 8d. for Home Missions, whilst the total receipts had been only £5,500 15s. 6d. In the following year the Bletchingly and Farnham Mission figures for £144 6s. 2½d., Chichester £34 19s. 1d., Sussex £24 18s.; the debt to the Treasurer having swollen to £4,189 14s. The last Report signed by Dr. Coke, 1813, shows £47 17s. 6d. as the cost of the Bletchingly Mission, £132 8s. 2d. of the Farnham, [and £2 15s. of the Chichester Mission, and a debt of £6,118 7s. 4d. due to the Treasurer. With a debt so rapidly accumulating and the great collector cut off, no wonder Home Missions were abandoned. The last Report that adverts to Home Missions says: 'If these Missions are promoted and encouraged, we are of opinion that every village in the nation will soon know the joyful sound.' Alas! how far this is from having been accomplished in the sense here meant, may be gathered from the fact that in the 'Wilderness' we are now considering there are

more than five hundred parishes without a Methodist chapel or Methodist preaching.

If Chertsey, now the head of a Circuit, possessed any Methodism sixty years ago, it was difficult to find. A good man who went in search of it, James Horne by name, and who may be said to have laid the foundation of the Guildford Circuit, failed to discover it. This man's history shows so plainly what may be done by comparatively feeble instrumentality, animated by steady, self-denying zeal, and illustrates so forcibly and so beautifully the growth of the grain of mustard seed, that we cannot do better than dwell upon it. May it encourage others to go and do likewise !

James Horne was born in the city of Salisbury, Oct. 9th, 1798. Beyond this fact and the vastly more important one, that his parents loved as well as feared God, but little is known of his earliest years. He lost his father when quite young, but cherished a lively recollection of his widowed mother as a *good Methodist*, who often led him by the hand to the six o'clock morning prayer-meeting. For a short time he was indebted to the assistance of friends, but was early thrown upon his own resources, to which may be traced the character of self-reliance and well-regulated independence of mind that throughout life characterized his conduct. Before he was seventeen years of age he went to sea, a calling that he followed for four years ; during which, amidst all the dangers, moral and spiritual, to which it exposed him, he was graciously watched

over and preserved by a loving God—a result that he in after life attributed to the early training and faithful prayers of a pious mother. Upon relinquishing the sea he settled near Buckingham, and soon after—on Sept. 21st, 1819—was united in matrimony to Mary Chitty, of Poyle, Surrey.

At this time, though having the fear of God before their eyes, they had neither of them realized an interest in His love; but it was not long before they were made partakers of this blessing that gave a new character to their existence, and was the fountain of all their joys throughout a long and wellspent life. It was in the year 1819, whilst listening to a sermon by the Rev. W. Breedon, in the Wesleyan Chapel at Padbury, near Buckingham, then in the Brackley Circuit, from the text, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another' (Mal. iii. 16), that James yielded to the strivings of the Spirit, and determined to cast in his lot with the people of God. He at once sought and obtained admission to the Methodist Society, an example that was followed by his happy partner the following quarter. A sermon by the same minister from the text, 'Break up your fallow ground' (Jer. iv. 3), preached in the Buckingham Chapel, was the immediate cause of this decision on her part. They proved the blessedness of Christian communion not only between themselves, but also with the people of God, and for a short time were supremely happy in their newly-formed connections, when the failing health of Mrs. Horne

reminded them that they still were denizens of the vale of tears. Other remedial measures failing, James was advised to take his wife to her native air in Surrey. She had been born at Poyle, in the parish of Seale, not far from Aldershot. Her parents were at that time living in the same vicinity, her mother being attached to the Independents, but her father to the Wesleyans, whom he had joined some twenty years before as one of the fruits of the Farnham Mission. The good old man and his wife have since died at the advanced ages of eighty and eighty-seven in perfect peace. The recently-married couple accordingly left Buckinghamshire, and came to Flexford, a hamlet near Poyle, lying a little off the road from Guildford to Farnham, but otherwise about midway between those places.

‘No one,’ he writes, ‘can tell the loss of Christian society but those who have felt it. I had been in the habit of conducting the service before I left Buckinghamshire, and therefore I began to think what I should do. Two or three of us used to meet together to read and to pray, and I used to give an exhortation. A friend opened his house at Flexford, and we held service there for some time, and the congregation increased;’ but being a timid man, he feared his landlord would turn him out of his house, and the services had to be relinquished. At this time Mr. Horne was keeping a school, but though good numbers encouraged his labours, the occupation was not favourable to his health, and he sought for other employment.

In the year 1822 a small farm at Normandy* was to let, and obtaining a promise of a lease of it, he took possession and felt himself settled in the neighbourhood. 'Then,' he continues, 'we began seriously to think how we could get Methodist preaching. I asked a few friends to meet at my house, and after consultation I wrote to Mr. Gaulter, then President of the Conference,' or more probably as Chairman, as he then was, of the Second London District. The letter, it seems, miscarried, and as the result of a second meeting, Mr. Horne undertook a pilgrimage to Chertsey in search of a Methodist preacher; and thus he describes his journey:—'I accordingly went one Sabbath morning, distance thirteen miles to walk; was very much pained as I walked along to see the desecration of the Sabbath. Men were everywhere at work in their gardens, some at harrow, others digging and planting. Such was the state of Surrey fifty years ago' (1871).

Arrived at Chertsey he finds the preaching place closed and the services abandoned; and enquiring of the only person who, he was told, could give him information about the Methodists, he had no sooner 'mentioned the name of Wesleyan-Methodists than it was like putting a match to gunpowder, and he closed the door in my face. . . . Thoroughly disgusted and

* It was in this village that William Cobbett for many years lived, and plied his trenchant pen. He is described as a good neighbour, on very friendly terms with Mr. Horne. His farm is now the property of Wesleyans, and his house the home of the Methodist preachers.

disheartened I began my homeward journey, and as I sat by the wayside to eat some refreshments I had taken with me, I felt like Jonah, cast down and deserted.'

But it must not be supposed that whilst he was thus longing, though in vain, for the refreshing ordinances of Methodism, he refused or neglected to drink of such streams as were ready at hand. The waste lands and barren heaths of Surrey were but too true a type of the moral and spiritual wilderness around : but amidst the almost complete neglect of religion that afflicted his soul, there were *some* spots cultivated. There was an Independent chapel at Perry Hill, some three miles from his residence, with whose minister, Mr. Haymes, Mr. Horne formed a close and lasting friendship. These two became hearty co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord, Horne's house being the home of the minister when he came to prosecute his labours at Normandy or Flexford, and himself foremost in securing the erection of a chapel at Normandy in connection with the Congregational Surrey Mission (three of his pupils being the first to subscribe half-a-crown each), and the instrument of raising an efficient and flourishing Sunday-school on the same premises, and for fifty years there were those who remembered him as the best conductor the school ever possessed.

About this time the hearts of Mr. Horne and his friends were cheered by an unexpected visit from the Rev. R. Haddy, whose name first appears on the *Minutes* as a missionary to South Africa in 1825. He and

his wife had come to Guildford to see her father before they sailed, and enquiring for any Methodists in the neighbourhood, he had been directed to Mr. Miller (still living in 1871), and by him to Mr. Horne. 'We gave him a cordial welcome, spent the afternoon conversing about the place and what could be done,' and he promised on his return to London to use his influence with the President on their behalf. Hope now ran high, but was destined to be again frustrated. Upon Mr. Haddy's return to Guildford he found Mr. Vidler, from the Mission House, urging his return to London, as the ship, instead of sailing in three or four days, was to leave the next morning, so that no opportunity offered for the exercise of his kind intentions. They were the more glad that they had 'not let him go without a sermon, and he preached in the evening to about seventy persons, and gave great satisfaction,' the remembrance of which lasted for half a century.

Amidst hopes and disappointments James Horne continued to worship at Perry Hill, carefully giving the friends there to understand that he was a Wesleyan in heart, and would take himself off as soon as his efforts or the providence of God should bring the Wesleyans to his neighbourhood. One Sabbath morning he was not a little surprised to be informed that two gentlemen from Godalming awaited him outside the chapel. These were Mr. Isaac Austen, from the Sevenoaks Circuit, who had lately established a business at the former town, and Mr. Golding, a young man whom he had found in

a draper's establishment there. They had some time yearned for Wesleyan associates, and learning there was a Wesleyan chapel in that direction, at a distance of nine or ten miles, they had started with a determination of finding it, for in no other direction could anything of the kind have been discovered within twenty or thirty miles. They had walked sharply for two or three hours when they fell in with a man of whom they enquired whether there was any Methodist chapel or any Methodists in the neighbourhood. Their respondent treated them to a rich dish of Antinomianism, liberally spiced with abuse of all Methodists and Methodism generally, but wound up by directing them to Perry Hill Chapel, at a distance of two or three miles, where just then they would probably find James Horne, who could no doubt tell them all about the Methodists if the neighbourhood were 'unfortunately cursed with any.'

The production of their hymn books and exhibition of their Society Tickets, obtained by post from Seven-oaks, *only* about forty miles off, soon explained their object and made James Horne's heart leap for joy. His hopes seemed at last about to be realized. They spent that day in reading, prayer, and praise, mixed with Christian conversation at Mr. Horne's, who shortly returned the visit at Godalming. It was then some months before the intercourse was resumed, till upon the occasion of the Rev. Hugh M'Neile, then of Albury, preaching at Stoke Church, near Guildford, they by mutual consent made that a half-way house of meeting,

and continued their intercourse and explanations of apparent coolness till near midnight, pacing up and down the Woodbridge Road, little dreaming they should ever there see the commodious Guildford Chapel that now adorns the spot. From that hour 'our friendship,' writes James, 'continued until death,' and the affectionate manner in which Mr. Horne always spoke of Mr. Austen was sufficient to satisfy any one that they had been friends united by the closest, dearest, and most enduring ties.

The operations of nature and of Providence are carried on more by the concurrence of several co-operating causes or events than by any single and remarkable exhibition of power. In like manner several trains of events were now working together to produce the result for which James Horne had for years prayed. A gentleman of the name of Thomas Keeling, of Run-corn, in Cheshire, and whose mother had lived and died a member of the Wesleyan Society, had some years before this come to Puttenham, a village midway between Normandy and Godalming, to study Hebrew and Greek, under the clergyman of that parish, with the view of entering the ministry of the Established Church, the living of St. James's, Manchester, being at his command. The tutor was an eccentric character, and probably more fond of the field than the study; at all events the pupil oftentimes found that, when ready with his lesson, his preceptor was wanting. Upon one occasion, however, he abruptly sent young Keeling to

a certain village to read a sermon to the people in lieu of the service they were expecting from himself. This first effort was so far successful that it was repeated, and before long the sermon read gave place to a chapter in the Bible, accompanied by an exhortation and prayer, and in the end the pupil became quite popular. In the meanwhile he began first to question, and then to decide, that he had no call to the ministry ; but having become fully alive to the spiritual destitution of the locality, he regularly visited the sick, distributed tracts, Bibles, and other religious books, and conducted regular service first at a house in Flexford, and then at a small chapel at Pink's Hill. These he maintained at intervals for several years ; for, being of a delicate constitution, he passed his winters in the south of France, and took the opportunity to visit Flexford on each of his journeys going and returning.

With this gentleman Mr. Horne had early become acquainted, and indeed he had acted as his agent in supplying the people during his absence with tracts and books. On the occasion of his visit about Easter, 1825, Mr. Horne wrote to invite Mr. Austen and Mr. Golding over to hear him. Some of the people, unknown to Mr. Horne, had urged Mr. Keeling to get him to preach, so that the services might be continued during his absence, and before leaving the pulpit in the evening he announced that preaching would be continued on the following Sabbath. Many supposed he was about to prolong his visit, but upon descending he informed Mr.

Horne that he must conduct the services in future. Mr. Horne hesitated to comply, but taking Mr. Austen and Mr. Golding with him to his father-in-law's, he at length consented to make an attempt on the next Sabbath, on condition that Mr. Austen would supply for the following one, and be ready in case of a break-down. A large congregation greeted his first attempt, when he selected as his text, 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found,' etc., and like many another young evangelist, when he had done he thought the Bible could not furnish him with another text; though subsequent experience also taught him that appropriate texts are easier to find than suitable sermons.

Such was the simplicity of his *call to preach*. He felt anxious to attempt something for the good of his neighbours, but did not press himself into the work. No bishop's hands laid upon his head separated him to the work of an evangelist. He passed no examination at a Local-preachers' meeting. He conformed to the conventional rules of no church. The matter was discussed by a few of his neighbours, devoid of all ecclesiastical authority, and settled between his own conscience and the Master. 'I used,' he writes, 'to have my hymn book in my pocket, and opening it upon this occasion my eye lighted upon this verse :

' My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,
 Into Thy blessèd hands receive ;
And let me live to preach Thy word,
 And let me to Thy glory live ;
My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the sinner's Friend.'

Thus commenced a laborious life in the service of God and in connection with Methodist ordinances : for no superintendent at this time directed or controlled their proceedings, nor indeed any recognised agent of the Conference had any cognisance of them, further than the preacher at Sevenoaks, who quarter by quarter remitted their tickets by post to Mr. Austen and Mr. Golding. These two self-constituted Local-preachers in turns furnished essentially Wesleyan services to those poor people for a whole year or longer, without remuneration of any sort or any wish for any, but free of all cost to those who heard ; having freely received, they freely gave.

About this time a supervisor of Excise of the name of Hall had been sent to Guildford. Finding that there was no Methodist preaching at Guildford, but that there was such at Pink's Hill, he speedily went over and formed the acquaintance with, and strengthened the hands of, our two zealous friends. His professional duties taking him to the Paper Mills at Chilworth, some three miles on the opposite side of Guildford, he there obtained from Mr. Rowland, the proprietor, permission to have preaching in one of the large mill rooms, in which one of their friends had a Sunday-school of one hundred children. Mr. Austen was the first to open the commission at this place, which he did in May or June, 1825, to what they considered a large congregation. In this way their labours were increased without any increase of labourers, for Mr. Hall soon procured a re-

moval to a place where he could enjoy intercourse with a Wesleyan Society. Still Horne and Austen laboured on, and God blessed their labours. The foreman of the paper mills, a backslider, was restored, the piety of his wife quickened, three, and ultimately the whole, of their children brought into the right way.

But it was not long before opposition met them. The services at Pink's Hill were conducted in a chapel belonging to the Unitarians, who occupied it only once in a fortnight, and, through Mr. Keeling's influence, lent it when not required for their own services. The regular minister from Mead Row, Godalming, obtained but a small congregation when he visited the place, sometimes not more than could be counted on the fingers of one hand ; but when Horne or Austen preached, the place was crowded with two hundred hearers. This, then, was a manifest misappropriation of the edifice, and at the end of twelve months our friends were requested to discontinue their occupation ! What was to be done ? A worshipping people had been gathered, consciences awakened, souls converted, a Class of eight or ten members constituted, if with some irregularity. Must the field whitening to the harvest be abandoned to the wild beasts of the forest ? No such thought could be entertained for a moment ; and Mr. Horne opened his own house for the services, the Class, the Sunday-school, and prayer-meetings ; and for thirty-six years was this the preacher's home, and for a large portion of that period the preaching place too, until the little chapel was built

upon a piece of freehold given for the purpose by Mr. Horne, who had then become the owner of a small farm.

This miniature Circuit, embracing two preaching places and two Local-preachers, without either travelling preacher or steward, had been in operation about a year, when, one Monday morning, upon mounting the coach for London, Mr. Austen recognised the Rev. W. Toase, then Chairman of the Portsmouth District, journeying from his Circuit town of Portsmouth to the great metropolis. Mr. Austen soon laid the case of Godalming and Normandy before the zealous chairman, who at once informed him of his own efforts to introduce Methodism into Petersfield, a market town about midway between Portsmouth and Godalming, and where he had hired a barn or shed, and was fitting it up at an outlay of £70 or £80, which, he said, he was determined to pay out of his own pocket, if no one would help him. At his invitation, Mr. Austen was present at the opening of this chapel, on May 15th, 1826, and by his persuasion, and relying upon his promise of assistance in every form practicable, Mr. Austen and Mr. Golding, after hunting all over the town, secured a room near the market house at Godalming, and fitted it up for preaching at an outlay of £70. This was opened on Good Friday, the Rev. W. Toase preaching in the morning, G. B. Macdonald in the afternoon, and F. B. Potts, all from Portsmouth, in the evening. In the *Minutes* of 1826 Petersfield first appears alone under Portsmouth without the dignity of a number, the Rev. R. Gover

being the preacher, and reporting forty-seven members in 1827. This minister visited and preached at Godalming one Sabbath, shortly after the opening, and at once set to work to organise a Society. He found eight or ten at Chilworth ready to his hand; thence eight miles to Pink's Hill, and found a similar class; returning five miles to Godalming, where a good congregation awaited him, and where he formed a third class of ten members: so that in 1827 Godalming is associated with Petersfield, under the pastoral charge of Mr. Wilson (better known as Captain Wilson, from having been the captain as well as owner of a trading vessel), who reported 108 members to Conference in 1828.

Not a little excitement and opposition were created in the town of Godalming by the intrusive audacity of these Methodists, who could not help remarking that many of their persecutors were ere long silenced by remarkable means. One, a member of another church, openly reviled the preachers, calling them play-actors, and ridiculing them in every way; but he was soon glad to decamp in the night, to avoid being provided for at his country's expense. Another, who was working close by the preaching-room, scoffed at the people as they went in, saying they were going to hear a 'cast-iron preacher,' and that the whole thing was 'going by steam.' But shortly afterwards, as he was going to London with his waggon, he slipped off the shaft, and was killed on the spot. He was a well-known character in the town, and Mr. Austen did not

fail to draw the attention of the congregation to the awful suddenness of his end.

The financial arrangements of the Circuit during these first years were on a very limited scale, the preacher's expenses for the year, exclusive of travelling, varying from under £50 to about £65; but even these could not have been met, but for the liberality of such men as Mr. Irving, of Bristol, Mr. Crop, of London, and especially Mr. Butterworth, who more than once contributed as much as £20 at a time. Mr. Austen acted as Circuit Steward up to 1843, and had often to make large advances.

In going Sabbath after Sabbath from Normandy to his labours at Chilworth, Mr. Horne had to pass through Guildford, and it was, to his mind, a source of deep regret that there was no Methodist preaching in that town, numbering its inhabitants as it did by thousands. There was then residing there, engaged in tuition, a pious lady by name Miss Jostling. On her, one Saturday, James Horne called, and unfolded to her his anxieties; and after an earnest conversation, during which her mind was deeply impressed with the persuasion that she ought to make some effort for the introduction of Wesleyan teaching, they united in prayer that God would open their way. There was also another pious lady residing there at this time, whose predilections for Methodism were of old standing, Mrs. Attfield by name, of whom we shall speak more fully hereafter.

This Miss Jostling, while on a visit to Miss Parr at Petersfield, a lady of like occupation, was on her way with her hostess to the Congregational Chapel one Sunday morning, when they were accosted by the Rev. W. Wilson, whom Miss Parr had assisted in Circuit finances. From what passed, Miss Jostling expressed a wish to hear him preach; so in the evening they went to the Wesleyan Chapel, or room, and heard him. The word came with such fresh light and power to Miss Jostling that she then and there begged Mr. Wilson to come and preach at Guildford. His way was not as yet open, but shortly afterwards she heard him on several occasions at Godalming and Chilworth.

On Good Friday, 1829, and probably shortly after Mr. Horne's interview with Miss Jostling, she and two or three other ladies went to hear the Rev. W. Wilson preach the anniversary sermons of Godalming Chapel, if such it could be called, and in so doing got not a little wet. Miss Jostling's muslin dress especially elicited Mr. Wilson's sympathy, whose gallantry, as noted as his abounding cheerfulness, invited the retort that it was all his fault, for not coming to Guildford to preach, instead of making them come to Godalming to hear. Thus appealed to, he promised to come if a suitable place were found. Thus encouraged, Miss Jostling applied to her friend Mr. Whitburn, the auctioneer and cabinet-maker, to let them have his auction room for preaching on the Sabbath and one week night, which he finally agreed to do, at a rental of

£10 10s. per annum. This room, capable of accommodating two hundred persons, was accordingly fitted up, and the Revs. W. Wilson and Timothy Ingle opened it; and here the Wesleyans worshipped till, in 1842 or 3, under the auspices of the Rev. Isaac Harding, the present handsome chapel was erected.

The Rev. R. Gover, as already indicated, had been stationed at Petersfield in 1826, under the direction of Mr. Toase, and reported forty-seven members in 1827, when he was succeeded by Mr. Wilson. In 1829 the Circuit was 'Petersfield and Godalming,' the numbers being 134, and Mr. Hurt the preacher, who was changed two years later for J. Saunders, a married man, when 'Board' was raised from 10s. to 14s. a week! In 1835 the minister who had hitherto resided at Petersfield was removed to Guildford, as the head of the Circuit, the numbers having fallen to 114. Without saying that these repeated changes in the ministry were not necessary or expedient, it is a fact that the reluctance of preachers to remain a second or third year in these less cultivated parts of the field has often retarded the advance of Methodism. All men are not equal to so heavy a cross; and if they cannot rise to the necessities of the case, perhaps a change is the path of wisdom. There is much isolation, and it is not every man that can stand alone.

Mr. Horne had now (1829) been in the neighbourhood about seven or eight years; he was as yet hardly

thirty years of age, was possessed of no wealth, and but a limited education ; nor did he lay claim to any great natural talents, either of eloquence or of any other kind. He had a young family rising around him, and had to earn daily bread for them as well as himself by the manual labours of a farm of a few acres, conjoined to the equally arduous duties of a village schoolmaster ; and yet, by persevering and faithful prayer, and by sedulously following up the openings of Providence, he was the pioneer as well as one of the main instruments of establishing five or six preaching places, with all their beneficent influences, and thus contributing to the establishment of a Wesleyan Circuit, which, with its offsets, formed for thirty or forty years the centre or an otherwise unbroken ' Methodist Wilderness,' embracing the whole of West Surrey, West Sussex, nearly the whole of Hampshire, and large parts of Wiltshire and Berks. This had not been done without much opposition and much self-sacrifice. The labours of the farm so fully occupied the time not devoted to teaching, that he had few hours for study, and even less for reading. His favourite time for preparing for the pulpit appears to have been whilst thrashing in the barn. With the heads of his discourse chalked up on the door, he developed and rehearsed his discourses as he plied the flail. Twice and more frequently three times a day he preached—say at home in the morning ; at Chilworth, eight miles, in the afternoon ; Godalming, five miles, in the evening, with seven

miles to reach home, weary and perhaps wet, and half knee deep in the heavy clays and muddy lanes of the Hog's Back range of hills. Blackwater and Frimley on the one side, Bramley and Hambledon on the other, were still more distant stations, and yet he seldom, even in his later days, would go otherwise than on foot, not caring to give trouble to others, nor counting his own strength dear; always after the morning and afternoon service hurrying home, if not otherwise engaged, lest the preacher should have disappointed the Normandy congregation, and every now and then finding his solicitude not in vain—without rest or preparation occupying the pulpit himself; and after all was done he would not hesitate to go two or three miles out to visit the sick or dying. Five, six, seven miles around would he at any time go to pray with such as sought mercy, and many and many a time has he seen them rise from their knees rejoicing in God their Saviour. A few days before his death he stated there was scarcely a house in the neighbourhood, from the squire's mansion to the labourer's cottage, in which he had not offered up prayer with the inmates. For he made it a rule, whatever house he entered, not to leave it without speaking about Jesus, and praying with the people.

Still there was nothing obtrusive, bold, or boastful about him. He had his own opinions and views, his own line of action, and his own modes of proceeding; and he valued them, not because they were his own—

but rather they were his own because he valued them. He ever felt—

‘I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.’

From the day of his conversion to the day of his death he was a man of strong faith and persevering prayer, and scarce a spot in his fields but had been the scene of his wrestlings: barn, stable, cowstall, hayloft, had been his closet. ‘Many an hour,’ writes his daughter, ‘did he spend in prayer for those who were yet slumbering in their beds; and when the shades of evening gathered around him, and no eye but that of God observed him, he might be found in a quiet corner of the field, like another Jacob, pleading for those that lay near his heart, for the Church, and for the prosperity of Zion.’ The whole course of his life was marked by consistency, integrity, and faithfulness. He never hesitated to rebuke the ungodly with whom he came in contact, and many were led to acknowledge that this reproof was just. The glory of God and the salvation of souls lay near his heart, and in labouring to secure these ends he was willing to spend and be spent. Amidst much practical infidelity, great indifference, and abounding wickedness, all intensified by strong antinomian hyper-Calvinism, he ceased not to declare the whole counsel of God, and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, determined that if the word was choked or unfruitful the blood of souls should not be upon his skirts.

The lease of his farm having expired, and his landlord, who had promised him a new one, having just then died, the relative to whom the property descended refused to ratify the promise, and Mr. Horne had to turn out, not knowing where to go. An abandonment of Methodistic practices would have removed all difficulties ; the object of the landlord and the squire being to root Dissent out of the village. But just at this juncture the owner of a small freehold, desirous of parting with it, had verbally agreed to sell it to the adjoining squire for such price as Mr. Horne should put upon it, his judgment and integrity being relied upon by both parties. This price having been fixed, the buyer demurred, and offered a smaller, and perhaps again a smaller sum. The seller was naturally indignant, and appealed to Mr. Horne, who rejoined that if he felt at liberty to depart from the former bargain, which the other party seemed to have repudiated, he should himself be glad to become the purchaser. This he accordingly did, to the no small chagrin of the squire and his friends. Upon this little freehold Mr. Horne built a house, where he lived and died ; and before many years, on a corner of it, he had the pleasure of seeing a sanctuary erected for the worship of God. It would be well if the tyrannous spirit that dictated his eviction from his tenancy had died out ; but too many instances of its recurrence are constantly turning up to allow us to hope for an early realisation of so desirable a consummation.

His pecuniary means were at no time large, but he

was always cheerfully contented, and possessed the confidence and respect of all that knew him. For a short time in later years he held the office of Circuit Steward, which his friend Austen had occupied in the earliest years of the Circuit history. But the spiritualities were more in accord with his tastes and talents, than the temporalities. He seemed to live to do good to the souls of men; and yet he did not, according to his opportunity, neglect to promote any interest of the Church. We have already noted that he gave the ground on which the Wesleyan Chapel at Normandy stands; and just before his final illness, when it was in contemplation to enlarge the humble edifice, he offered to give what additional ground might be required. The first missionary meeting in the Circuit was held at his house in 1834, and the assiduity with which this object was fostered may be gathered from the fact that with a chapel seating not more than one hundred persons, Normandy furnished from £15 to £20 per annum to the Mission House. He was gathered home in peace February 26th, 1871, in his seventy-third year.

A new era in this region commenced with the appointment of the Rev. Isaac Harding to Guildford, in 1840. Dissatisfaction had for some time been felt with the arrangements of Circuit boundaries in this neighbourhood, and the Conference, in 1840, feeling its inability to deal with the question, deputed its authority to the Financial District Meeting, to 'conclude a new arrangement of the Croydon and Horsham, Lewes

and Eastbourne, Brighton and Guildford Circuits.' Several combinations were tried, and in 1842 the Guildford, Dorking, and Horsham Circuit contained sixteen preaching-places, embracing an area of considerably over 300 square miles, with 293 members, a staff of three Preachers, and a grant of £142 from [the Contingent Fund. Ultimately the division of Dorking and Horsham, with two Preachers and 109 members, and Guildford and Alton, with three Preachers and 232 members, was arrived at and maintained till 1860, when Alton was separated from Guildford. Subsequently, first Aldershot and then Sandhurst took part of what was Guildford ground. Alton has since been divided into two Circuits, Alton and Farnham. Redhill has been substituted for Dorking as the name of the Circuit, Horsham being made a 'lone' station.

No sooner was Mr. Harding appointed to Guildford, than he set to work to place Methodism on a firm basis. For ten years and more it had had its habitation in a 'room' only, and though humility is very excellent, especially in the inception of a cause, and in most cases the only possible course, yet there is a danger of being at ease destructive of Methodism and of Christianity in any shape. Methodism had disappeared from Petersfield, as from many another place, for want of a properly-settled habitation, and there was evident danger of the same result at Guildford. So Mr. Harding set about building a chapel, which still remains an ornament to the town. In this he was greatly assisted

by Mr. Haydon, a wealthy banker in the town, and a pious man, who, having had the loan of Mr. Wesley's tract on *Christian Perfection*, was so struck with it that he threw in his lot with Mr. Harding and his people, and remained a member of the Society for ten or twelve years. He was very deaf and advanced in years, and some misunderstanding between him and the Superintendent arising from these infirmities, is said to have been laid hold of by members of his family to cause a separation a short time before his death. Whilst he remained with the Methodists, he rendered them essential service, not only out of his own purse, but by his influence and piety. The Guildford chapel being completed and a minister's house adjoining it, Mr. Harding proceeded, with the same assistance, to erect others at Alton and Shalford; Farncombe (to suffice for Godalming) and Normandy soon followed. In a circular issued in July, 1843, he enumerates the following results of three years' work as proof that Methodism requires only to be fairly worked to succeed here as elsewhere: 'In 1840 there were in the Guildford Circuit only 84 members, now there are 260; 180 persons in the congregations, now 950; no chapel, now three, and £200 in hand towards a fourth; then four Sunday-schools with 120 children, now ten with 320 children; then six Local-preachers, now sixteen and two home Missionaries.' He gives it as 'a striking coincidence that in these places [twenty market-towns and hundreds of villages] uninfluenced

by Methodism, no evidence exists of any revival of religion in them during the last century; and as a consequence, that the moral and religious condition of the mass of the people is much the same here in 1843 as in other parts of England a century ago:’ a statement corroborated by the present writer’s experience fifteen or twenty years later. He proceeds, with perfect accuracy, and, alas! the case is only too nearly so at the present day: ‘What in other parts is the second century of Methodism, is in these the first; and what was long since accomplished elsewhere, has now to be done here. We have to preach in the open air [not in addition to, but for want of chapels], endure abuse, overcome opposition, collect congregations, form Societies, and build chapels over *three thousand* square miles of England.’ The energy and enterprise with which Mr. Harding prosecuted this work may be gathered not only from the results above enumerated, but also from the names of the gentlemen who consented to receive contributions for him, including Thomas Farmer and John Corderoy of London, Francis Riggall of Louth, and John Howard of Leeds.

We are sometimes apt to think that where a ‘cause’ has been abandoned all past labour is lost. But this is by no means true. Not to speak of the fruits that may be gathered up into other Churches, or that may have been already garnered every now and again, it is proved on resumption of the work that the progress of Methodism has been essentially forwarded. The father

of Mrs. Horne at Poyle, as fruit of the Farnham Mission, has been alluded to as a case in point. Another that came under the present writer's observation was Mrs. Attfield, of Guildford. Her first awakening was in the Independent chapel, but her real conversion took place when in the family of the Rev. Peard Dickenson, one of Mr. Wesley's clerical coadjutors, who officiated at City-road for some years. She entered this family in 1806, and joined Mrs. Corderoy's Class at Lambeth, where she received her first ticket from Dr. Adam Clarke. It was under a sermon by the Rev. W. Vipond that she found the pearl of great price. In 1810 she reluctantly returned to Guildford, and at once joined the despised and feeble band of Wesleyans, consisting almost exclusively of some soldiers and their wives. This was for some years part of the charge of the Surrey Mission, which is said by her to have awakened 'a widespread religious concern in various parts of Surrey and Sussex.' Mrs. Attfield (as she subsequently became) cherished a lively interest in these early efforts, and often walked as much as eight or twelve miles from home to attend the services, for benefit to her own soul and for the encouragement of others. The visits of the Rev. Moses Dunn were highly blessed and prized, at a time when Methodism was all but extinct in the town. She was present at the opening of the chapel at Farnham by Dr. Coke : a season long remembered as one of great power and grace. Indeed, she informed the present writer that she had accepted a

situation in a branch of his mother's family at Farnham in preference to many others, because in that town she could enjoy Wesleyan services.

In 1826 she became the wife of Mr. Attfield, a deacon of the Independent Church at Guildford, who ultimately became a staunch Wesleyan. When the Wesleyan services were re-commenced at Chilworth and Godalming, she occasionally attended them, and was one of those ladies who induced Mr. Wilson to commence them at Guildford. Her husband generously opened his house to entertain the Preachers, and, with another, became responsible for the rent of the preaching-room. Through good report and evil report she adhered to the people of her choice, and rejoiced when the Preacher, being removed to Guildford, took up his abode next door to her own home. When Isaac Harding projected the building of a chapel, Mrs. Attfield gladly became the treasurer, and kept the large and complicated accounts with great accuracy (see the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* for 1864, p. 1062).

Shortly after the formation of the Guildford and Alton Circuit, in 1844, Farnham, midway between the two, appears on the Circuit-books with five members, but disappears in 1858. Petersfield records thirteen members in 1848, but disappears in 1855. The number of places tried for a few years, and then abandoned, either through deficiency of Local-preachers or the removal of certain persons from the village, is very large. There were fourteen places on the first Plan of

this Circuit, and twelve on the last ; but of these, only seven were on the former Plan. So much for having no chapels.

Guildford and Alton are twenty miles apart ; so in 1860, there being two Preachers and one hundred and eighty-four members, the Circuit was divided, each taking one Preacher : Guildford, ninety-one members and seven preaching-places ; and Alton, sixty-two members and five preaching-places. A loss of one-sixth of the members was suffered in one year. The numbers, however, rose to one hundred and four, and eighty, by 1863.

The Rev. C. Prest had for several years been pressing the claims of Home Missions, and after some hesitation it was determined to try whether a little more labour bestowed upon some dependent Circuits would not in a short time render them more nearly self-supporting. A Home-Missionary was consequently appointed to reside at Godalming, in the Guildford Circuit, and before Woking and Knap Hill had been detached, the Circuit touched 174 members. It now stands at 186, with a lay agent in lieu of a Home Missionary, and contributes £21 towards the £40 granted by the Home-Mission Committee. It is now a compact Circuit of five or six preaching-places, five supplied with chapels, and all within four or five miles of the Circuit-town.

Woking and Cobham, nearly the last-formed Circuit in that vicinity, was formed by taking Knap Hill and

Woking from Guildford, absorbing Cobham, which had been associated with Kingston, and adding one or two outlying places from Dorking. It was constituted in 1878, with two Preachers and eighty-seven members in 1879, grown to 139 in 1883.

With reference to the Knap Hill chapel erected by the Guildford Circuit in 1867, it was rumoured that upon some meeting of the clergy with their Bishop—Sumner—some of those in that neighbourhood were lamenting the fact that the Wesleyans were making such an interference in their midst. His Lordship asked the two or three whose parishes most nearly surrounded that spot, if their churches were open on the Sunday evening ; and receiving an answer in the negative in each case, exclaimed : ‘ Then it serves you all right ! ’ It was not long before they were also opened, and probably a thousand persons attended Divine service every Sabbath evening, a large proportion of whom would otherwise have been spending their time at the village ale-houses. No wonder Methodism improves the morals of a locality, even where it does not gather many converts. At another place in the same Circuit, the erection of a small Wesleyan chapel was immediately followed by the building of a church, where evening services were at once held.

At Woking Station, on a site given by Dr. Ingoldby, of City-road, a very modest building was put up by the Guildford Circuit in 1872, to serve temporarily as a chapel, but ultimately as a school-room. There has

now been erected, on the space reserved for it, a chapel to seat four or five hundred persons. It was a pleasing incident that whilst the first modest building was drawing near to completion, a note was received from the clergyman of the locality, thanking some of the Wesleyans for having done what he had long endeavoured in vain to persuade his parishioners to do, and offering a contribution towards the outlay, with an annual subscription for the Sunday-school. The parishioners have since erected an iron church.

These two places are situated in a locality where they are certainly much needed, and to which they have already proved great blessings. The Cause at Knap Hill, some three miles from Woking Station, was commenced in May, 1865, in true primitive style. The services, for the most part, at first were conducted by students from Richmond, in the open air, on a wild heath, the congregations varying from forty on a wet morning to three hundred on an evening. As winter approached, a room in an inn was hired; driven from this, a coach-house accommodated some, whilst seats around the open doors invited others. There being some difficulty and delay in getting land and erecting a chapel, the last refuge was a cottage, where two rooms were occupied, the Preacher standing in the doorway between the two. At length, however, the chapel was finished.

In 1869 the Rev. C. H. Kelly opened as a Wesleyan chapel one in Godalming purchased from the Indepen-

dents, who had just erected a larger one in a more prominent position. This Mission had been commenced, or re-commenced, in 1863, when the Rev. J. C. Reddaway, the first Missionary, gives the following account of a rural Sunday morning: 'In going through the village, I was surprised by seeing men working in their gardens; others digging potatoes in a field, almost under the shadow of the church; others carrying timber and other burdens. This is the usual practice. I spoke to those who were thus engaged. Some mocked, others said nothing, but kept working on. . . . On asking a woman a question relating to her soul, she waxed indignant, and said it was no business of mine; the clergyman never asked her such questions, and ordered me out of the house.' However, less than two years later he reports: 'I am thankful to see a diminution of Sabbath desecration, though it is still lamentably prevalent. . . . Christians of other denominations have been stirred up, and good has been done in a variety of ways.' Such accounts surely rendered it binding upon the Wesleyans to re-establish, if possible, the work that had been abandoned. Here were found some who had been connected with that Cause twenty years before, but had now joined other denominations; and at Knap Hill also the same was the case, except that there was no inducement to form association with any Christian body. So again at Petersfield, to which the Rev. A. Baxter was appointed, as a new Mission, in 1870. He says: 'I lately visited the almshouses, where I found

two aged members of our Church. I was delighted to find their testimony so distinct as to the blessedness of the Class-meetings in the "olden times" [thirty years before]. When I told them that we were about to erect a chapel in Petersfield, and that a Minister was stationed in the town, their eyes filled with tears of joy.'

A chapel was built at Petersfield the next year, in one of the principal roads, and immediately accessible to all the town. This has had to be enlarged, and a school added. At Emsworth, on the coast, was a favourable opening, where for a time services were conducted; and there were other places available, but men and money were wanting to occupy them. Some persecution was experienced. A stone was hurled at the head of a brother whilst leading the prayer at an open-air meeting, and a man, with an oath, snatched the hymn-book from his wife's hands and dragged her from the place. The squire in one place threatened to hinder our people all he could, and dismissed one of his men who attended the Wesleyan services.

This Mission embraced the villages of Liss and Froxfield, taken from the Alton Circuit, and in 1871 contained 70 members, increased to 103 in 1883, with every prospect of a healthy growth. In the interval a chapel has been built at Liss in place of the small and rotten shed that had been kindly lent for a long series of years, but which was no longer to be had.

At Midhurst, nearly ten miles from Petersfield, a

chapel was built a year or two ago, with a school-room attached in such a way that they can be thrown together if needed ; not a bad arrangement for villages. This to a great extent has been the fruit of the labours of the District Missionaries. No site could be obtained immediately within the town, though sought for several years ; but yet the chapel and school, built just outside on the road to a large village close by, promise to be extensively useful. The member for the borough, once represented by Samuel Warren, of Wesleyan origin, and afterwards by Richard Cobden, had promised, with the consent of the clergyman, to lay the foundation-stone ; but finding the site to be in another parish, the rector of which withheld his consent, he sent his contribution and explained why he had to withdraw his promise to officiate.

When the camp at Aldershot was determined upon, Dr. Rule induced our authorities to erect an iron chapel, in which he was appointed to officiate in 1857, though the structure was not then complete. A gentleman who resided at Guildford during the summer months of 1859, renewed his intercourse with Dr. Rule at Aldershot, distant only a few miles. The doctor, who had discovered the darkness of that region, was anxious that, in addition to the benefit conferred on the soldiers, Aldershot should be the means of spreading Methodist light all around, and called on this same gentleman with a project for building a chapel at Hale, one of the vilest sinks of debauchery surrounding the camp. Re-

ceiving the encouragement that he sought, the scheme was launched in the following spring. This building was erected on a principle not to be recommended except under the pressure of necessity, and took a long time to complete. A worthy brickmaker on the spot gave the bricks and tiles, or a large portion of them; another person gave some timber for the roof, another the glass, and so forth, and these materials were put together as money sufficient for any portion was obtained. It was not in itself a success. It had been too ambitiously planned; the church service adopted was not popular, and before the roof was on, the good brickmaker, Mr. Baker, who was the mainstay of the Cause, was removed to heaven. But though for a season it was let to the church people, their term has expired, and Methodist services have how been recommenced there with highly promising results. In the meanwhile it had gathered together a few Wesleyans still to be found in the neighbouring town of Farnham, who, when the services at Hale were discontinued, took a piece of ground in that town, and erected an iron chapel in connection with the Alton Circuit. For this the present permanent one, with school-room attached, was substituted after a few years, and in 1879 the Farnham Circuit was constituted, with one Minister, seventy-one members—now increased to 125—five preaching places, including till lately a 'room' at Hale, and seven or eight Local-preachers. If any Circuit deserves to be commended for its zeal, Farnham does,

though others, Sandhurst especially, are not to be forgotten.

Alton, to which were left 106 members, one Preacher, and four or five preaching-places, when Farnham was detached from it, has now reached 145 members, and opened, I believe, one or more additional preaching-places.

It was whilst Hale chapel was in course of erection, that the layman above alluded to, at the invitation of Dr. Rule, accompanied him to the neighbourhood of Sandhurst, 'prospecting.' The doctor wrote to him under date of April 19th, 1862: 'Our footing steadily strengthens in the country around, and God is gently and gradually raising up helpers, so that there is now prospect of ramifying into neighbouring villages, by help of Local-preachers and cottage services. *Then a new Home Mission Circuit.*' On this visit they found a farmer on a moderate scale, Mr. Cox, hearty in the cause, and Mr. Jarvis, clerk of the works at Broadmoor Asylum, equally energetic, and it was soon determined to make some sort of beginning. The gift of a piece of land was obtained from R. Gibson, Esq., and a rough structure was erected, partly dug into the side of a hill, partly constructed with old railway sleepers and anything that could be got together. This was occupied on June 20th, 1865, of course under Aldershot, as it remained for several years. By 1870, Aldershot had established six other preaching-stations, beside the two in the camp, though two were only open-air services.

To supply these it had two Ministers and seven Local-preachers. It was not till this year that any ministerial appointment was made for Sandhurst, where a nice chapel had now been erected, mainly due to the combined energies of the Rev. Joseph Webster and Mr. Jarvis; Mr. Wright, of York Town, rendering very efficient help.

A day-school was also established at Sandhurst about the same time, the first Missionary, Joseph Alger, handling the spade and hammer, if not the trowel, in true missionary style, in order to secure it. This is doing good service; there being 160 children on the books, with an average of 117 in attendance, and a cry for enlargement. There are now six chapels in the Circuit, and preaching in two or three other places, and 215 members in the Society, as the result of little more than fifteen years' work. At York Town, in this Circuit, there had been a small chapel, erected many years ago by workmen engaged in building the Military College there, but it appears never to have been Connexionally settled, and had been sold to the Baptists. It is said that one of the workmen disposed of his watch as a final sacrifice to secure its completion. Here, as in nearly every place where Methodism has once had a footing, some seed was found upon resumption of the services, and it is in great part owing to this that such rapid progress has been made in developing the work. Eversley, so closely associated with the name of Kingsley, is in this Circuit, and it was not difficult to

recognise the effects of his labours. But it was found that too many of his hearers only saw 'men as trees walking.' Some of these soon 'saw clearly' under the Methodist teaching, but unfortunately those who promised to be most useful soon followed a common example and removed to London.

At Hartley Row, another place in this Circuit, a futile attempt at obstruction was made by the rector. His church was inconveniently situated for his people, and during the erection of another in a more advantageous position, he had occupied a building, once a Baptist chapel, that was now about to be relinquished, but which would have suited as a Methodist chapel. Our Missionary called upon him to try to arrange a purchase. In this he failed; and upon the building being put up for sale by auction, in the conditions was inserted an obligation that the purchaser should enter into a heavy bond, to the effect that no preaching, or meetings for prayer, should be held in it; though it was stated in the sale-room, in reply to enquiries, that no objection would be made to its being used as a skittle-alley or beer-shop. It was accordingly purchased by a brewer for less than half the price the Wesleyans would have given for it. Their services had been held for some months under a beautiful grove on the village green, and this attempt at exclusion soon becoming known, an amount of sympathy was elicited that not only increased these gatherings, but helped greatly to float our cause when we began to build. In the mean-

while, services and a Sunday-school were held in the large room of an inn on the outskirts of the village, and adults flocked to the one, and children to the other. A site was obtained before long, and a chapel commenced, with a large vestry or school-room under the same roof, but it was soon found necessary to take down the wall of division and throw the whole into the chapel. The readiness with which the poor people contributed to this, and indeed other efforts, may be illustrated by the case of a shepherd, earning very low wages, who promised to contribute a sovereign. When he brought this, and was asked whether he really could afford so much, he joyfully replied : ' O, yes ! I had saved up seventeen shillings towards a new great-coat, but I will make the old one do for one more winter.' One would hope that the nights proved unusually mild to one so brave. An attempt was here made by clergy, and ladies by birth, to tyrannize over the children that attended our Sunday-school, but it was exposed and failed.

In another part of the Circuit, where there had been no Sunday-school and but little Church activity, a school was started with buns and oranges, and one if not two more curates brought on to the ground. The winds have only caused the tree to take deeper root.

More than one effort had been made to give Methodism a footing in Basingstoke, before Mr. Mead, from Bedfordshire, on taking possession of a farm not far from the town, was surprised to find no Methodism there, and

proffered assistance towards introducing it. A gentleman from Guildford met him and one or two others at Basingstoke, but, after a persevering search, no place in which to hold services could be found but an ill-lighted granary, to which access could only be obtained by a ladder, which, as it obstructed the pathway, had to be drawn up as soon as the congregation had collected. This, however, had to be submitted to for several years before a site could be obtained, and in 1874-75 a chapel erected. In the meantime, a Home Missionary had been located there by the Conference of 1872, who had in fact been on the ground already, the previous Conference having authorised the President to appoint a man if found expedient. Now, in 1883, there are ninety-one members and four chapels, and one or two other preaching-places, in this Circuit. Between Basingstoke and Sandhurst there are many towns and villages yet to be occupied, such as Odiham, and the villages surrounding it, that ought to form a good station for a Home Mission.

About this time it began to be felt that there were wide spaces not reclaimable by any Circuit, such as our 'Methodist Wilderness,' in connection with which a new movement was advocated in our newspapers, and recommended to the Conference by the Home Missionary Committee. In consequence of the acceptance of this view by the Conference, Dr. Jobson promised to find the means of support for a Missionary to the Lincoln District, and in 1875 a Missionary was appointed

to the Second London District. The Missionaries, assisted in late years by Mr. Elmes, a lay-agent, have gone through the length and breadth of the District, and though perhaps we cannot tabulate the results of their labours, or point to more than two or three new places as their fruits, they have everywhere been gladly received and their efforts owned, and there can be no doubt that they have largely contributed to sustaining the several Missions and weak Circuits, adding to their efficiency and increasing the number of converts. There remain, however, very many places into which it is hoped that such labours will be the means of introducing Methodism.

Now let us recapitulate, in order to gather into a focus, the progress made by our Church during the last ninety-two years. At the time of Mr. Wesley's death, all Hampshire, and great parts of Surrey and Sussex, constituted one Circuit—*Portsmouth*, with three Preachers, and 430 members. Twenty years later there were on the same ground seven Circuits or Missions, fifteen Preachers, and 1,696 members. In another thirty years these numbers are enlarged to eight Circuits and a half, eighteen Preachers, and about 3,000 members. Thirty years later, in 1871, there were seventeen Circuits or Missions, thirty-four Preachers, inclusive of appointments on behalf of the military, and 4,835 members (military included). Twelve years later, in 1883, the same ground is occupied by twenty-six Circuits and

Missions, employing forty-two Preachers, with 5,795 members.

If we now confine our attention to the so-called 'Methodist Wilderness,' this, so far as now included in the Second London District, was nearly all in 1871 comprised in the Guildford and Alton Circuit, with the Aldershot, Sandhurst, and Petersfield Missions, employing five or six Preachers, and counting 573 members. This area in 1883 embraced eight Circuits, with eleven Preachers, and 1,119 members; nearly double the number there was twelve years ago, notwithstanding the great tendency of the population of these country parishes, and especially of the young people, to whom a knowledge of Christ and His Gospel has imparted a confidence in Providence, to make their way to the metropolis and other large towns. No doubt this has not been accomplished without a large expenditure of men and money. The former we need not grudge, so long as the Head of the Church supplies us with them; and even as to the latter, it may well be asked if it can be better spent. Nor should it be forgotten, that though these Stations make a heavy draft upon the Home Mission Fund beyond what they themselves raise, they in some instances send as much or more to the Foreign Missionary Society; so that on the whole, in such cases, there is no loss, but perhaps a gain, to the general funds of Methodism. For instance, at a time when Guildford was receiving a grant of £40 per annum, it sent to the Foreign Missions and Contingent Funds a little over

£60 per annum. This is a favourable instance, no doubt, but yet a true one. Moreover, we may fairly hope that the demands made by these Circuits will diminish from year to year, whilst the contributions will grow.

The number of Preachers is undoubtedly large as compared with the number of members, being nearly one to one hundred. But this arises from its being to so large an extent *pioneer-work*; and it would be very unfair to compare these Stations with long-established Societies, which have been able to build large chapels and fill them. These Circuits are nothing like twenty years old on an average. But take the earliest year in John Wesley's history, in which we can compare the numbers of Preachers and members, when he had been engaged some twenty-nine years in building up Societies. At that time, the ten men whose names appear in Stations next after London, had an aggregate of 1,111 members under their charge. But in Sussex there were two men to 176 members, and in Kent two men to 147 members. Three men were appointed to 145 members at Colchester. So comparing early times with early times, there seems no reason to conclude that our expenditure, either of men or money, is excessive in proportion to the results reaped, if Wesley's days and Wesley's action may be the standard of comparison.

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